The Pagan Library

Beyond Reason

A new look at an old Devil

Aries

Inside my mind is a court room. It is dark and somber, a few shafts of light from high slit windows etch out sloping pillars of swirling dust. In the public gallery are a representative sample of the great unwashed; fighting, fornicating, eating, suckling piglets, and other sub-Bosch activities that lend atmosphere to the Baroque wanderings of my imagination. The judge is unhappy. Whatever happens, someone, somewhere, will hate him for it. In the dock are the three grand-dames from Shakespeare's "Scottish" play, and I am counsel for the defense. The Advocatus Diaboli, I guess. In the witness stand is "Dance with the Devil" by Audrey Harper and Harry Pugh, and grave are its accusations. But first, let's have its story.

Audrey Harper; a familiar tale of degradation and final redemption through our Savior Jesu Christos; sent to a Dr Barnado's home by her mother, she grew up with deprivation and social stigma. In time she becomes a WRAF, falls in love, gets pregnant, boyfriend dies, she turns to booze, gives up her baby and becomes homeless. Wandering to Piccadilly Circus she meets some Flower Children with the killer weed, and her descent into Hell is assured. By day she gets stoned and eats junk food; by night she sleeps in squats and doorways. Along comes Molly; the whore with a heart of gold who teaches Audrey the art of streetwalking. She flirts with shoplifting, gets into pills, and then gets talent spotted and invited to a Chelsea party, where wealth, power and tasteful decor are dangled as bait. At the next party she is hooked by the "group", which meets "every month in Virginia Water". She agrees to go to the next meeting which is to be held at Hallowe'en.

Inside the dark Temple lit by black candles and full of "A heady, sickly sweet smell from burning incense", she is "initiated" by the "warlock", whose "face was deathly pale and skeletal...his eyes...were dark and sunken" and whose "breath and body seemed to exude a strange smell, a little like stale alcohol." She signs herself over to Satan with her own blood on a parchment scroll, whereupon a baby is produced, its throat cut, and the blood drank. Following this she gets dumped on the "altar" and fucked as the "sacrifice of the White Virgin". The meeting finishes with a little ritual cursing and she's left to wander "home" in the dark.

Her life falls into a steady routine of meetings in Virginia Water, getting screwed by the "warlock", drug abuse, petty crime, and recruiting runaways for parties, where the drinks are spiked - "probably LSD" - and candles injected with heroin release "stupefying fumes into the air"; the object being sex kicks and pornography. She falls pregnant again, gets committed to a psychiatric hospital, has the baby, and gives it away convinced that the "warlock" would sacrifice it.

Things then become a confusion of Church desecration, drug addiction, ritual abuse, psychiatric hospital, and falling in with Christian folk who try vainly to save her soul. For rather vague reasons the "coven" decide to drop her from the team, and she dedicates herself to a true junkie's lifestyle with a steady round of overdosing, jaundice, and detoxification units. The "warlock" drops by to threaten her, and she makes her way north via some psychiatric hospitals to a Christian Rehabilitation farm. She gets married, has a child which she keeps, and becomes a regular churchgoer. But beneath the surface are recurring nightmares, insane anger and murderous feelings towards her brethren. At the Emmanual Pentecostal Church in Stourport she asks the Minister, Roy Davies, for help. He prays, and God tells him that she was involved with witchcraft. An exorcism has her born again, cleansed of her sin. She gets baptized and has no more nightmares, becoming a generally nicer person. She becomes the "occult expert" of the Reachout Trust and Evangelical Alliance, and makes a career out of telling an edited version of her tale.

Geoffrey Dickens MP persuades her to tell all on live TV; "Audrey, to your knowledge is child sacrifice still going on?" To this she replies, "To my knowledge, yes." After this the whole thing rambles into an untidy conclusion of self-congratulation, self-promotion, and self-justification; and for a grand finale pulls out a list of horrendous child abuse, which is shamelessly exploited in typically journalistic fashion, and by the usual fallacious arguments which links it to anything "occult"; help-lines, astro predictions in newspapers, and even New Age festivals.

And so we are left with a horrifying vision of hordes of Satanists swarming the country, buggering kids, sacrificing babies, and feeding their own feces to the flock. I would be tempted to consider this story a modern parable; a Rakes Progress for the late 20th century, were it not for the claim of truth and the accusations cast.

Throughout her tale Mrs. Harper shows herself to be a clumsy dissembler; inconsistencies appear throughout, and the tone is shrill and hysterical. "I know parts of my story are hard to believe. I realize there are some skeptics who will not accept that such things can happen." This is a perfect example of the fallacy known as "poisoning the well", but what part might we find hard to believe? On page 79 with her bare face hanging out she tells us that, "I was, by now, quite an accomplished young witch. I could levitate. I could bring down the powers of darkness to move furniture about." Better a willful septic than having us believe in levitating junkies. But was she a witch? When the Chelsea girl invites her along, "she never mentioned witchcraft. But somehow, as she spoke, her words conjured up an eerie atmosphere." And according to her testimony, nobody actually mentions witchcraft prior to Roy Davies, who is tipped the wink by Lord God Almighty.

Regardless of that, she still promiscuously mixes up the terms; witchcraft, Satanism and Paganism, playing free and easy with the rules of evidence. However, it does appear that there is a thing called Wicca or White Witches who "certainly do not set out to do evil", but are still damned because "even if they don't do deliberate harm, their activities are opposed to Christian teachings because they worship false gods." Obviously possessed of the spirit of discernment, or as Joseph Campbell said, "You can't fool around with Yahweh."[1] (beyond_reason.php#n1)

Okay, so where is the evidence? In Mrs. Harper's reality tunnel the evidence is everywhere, for the world is full of "evils that are the work of Satan." Not for Mrs. Harper the easy road of "hard facts" when she assures us that "There have been mounting suspicions over the years that child sacrifices take place regularly. I believe that they do. I have no evidence to support this belief." "It's my belief that some of the hundreds of children and adults who go missing every year end up being sacrificed." All that she offers us is her belief, but is it a rational belief? Consider these words from another book, in a chapter called "Schizophrenia: The Demon in Control - "Let's say that when you awake tomorrow, you find standing at your bedside a man with purple scale skin...from Mars...visible and audible only to you...he warns you not to reveal his presence; if you attempt to do so, he threatens, he will kill you instantly...On the

basis of what you can so clearly see and hear, you accept the fact, astounding as it is, that the stranger is what he says he is."[2] (beyond_reason.php#n2) Barbara O'Brien then goes on to describe the schizophrenic trip and how she toured America in Greyhound buses in an attempt to escape the "hook operators".

But, what if someone woke up to find Satan by their bed? Mrs. Harper is one of the sad minority to do just that. In hospital, after an overdose she returned to her bed to find on it "a miniature hooded figure...I was sure it was Satan manifesting himself to me." If we check the diagnosis of schizophrenia we find that the schizophrenic "ceases to experience his mental processes and his will as under his own control; he may insist that thoughts are being put into his mind."[3] (beyond_reason.php#n3) And what does Mrs. Harper tell us? She signed in blood a parchment scroll which stated that, "I am no longer my own. Satan is my master." As for arranging her social calendar, "I was rarely summoned...Some inner compulsion told me when, and where, to go...Satan could direct me to the coven by remote control." At other times there was "just the telepathic message buzzing in my head...Satan was beckoning...There was no resistance. I had to go." In fact most of the time "Satan was at the helm of my thinking processes." This is not all, for we also read that the schizophrenic "hears voices telling him what to do."

Three or four weeks after her "initiation", Mrs. Harper experienced a blinding headache. "Then a voice came to me, telling me to be at Highgate Cemetery just before midnight." The voice went on to give her some travel directions, which was very obliging. "In acute stages of the illness other hallucinations and delusions of varied kinds may be present." I think we can safely classify levitation and telekinesis under the heading of hallucination and delusion, but what about babies being killed? Or coven meetings even? "The paranoid schizophrenic has 'a persistent idea...that there is a conspiracy or concerted action against him...a delusion of grandeur." Whenever she took an overdose, "I knew who was behind it all - the coven. This was Satan attacking me." Whenever things went wrong for Mrs. Harper it was Satan, "making me follow foolish impulses...causing me to behave in a stupid way." Every time she got moving "Satan played another of his little tricks" to stop her short. "Delusions of unworthiness occur in depressive illnesses in association with misery and hopelessness." Any comment Mrs. Harper? "I felt myself wishing that I could be good, like these nurses, instead of a servant of the Devil." "...how inadequate I was compared with the other churchgoers."

On her first TV program she was asked, "How do you know you were not just on a bad trip?", to which she replied, "A bad trip doesn't last five years." But if this bad trip is schizophrenia, it could. As far as backgrounds go, hers was ideal for inducing psychosis; harsh, cold and alienating. Significantly she had nicknamed the matron of the home "the witch", and after her escape attempts "It didn't take the police long...they soon had me back under the spell of the witch." A process of learned helplessness. Bob Wilson [4] (beyond_reason.php#n4) discusses the possible role of schizophrenia and self-medication in heroin addiction, and certainly at the more stable periods of her life she seems to have no problem giving up her drugs. Although this may not be important, it is worth bearing in mind that Virginia Water is home to the Royal Holloway Psychiatric Hospital, which, at the time of her tale, had a bustling schizophrenic population. Maybe this explains how she ended up so often wandering around dazed in the dark. Of course this is all speculation, but the mere possibility that an undiagnosed schizophrenic with a medieval delusion is trying to drag us into her fantasy, and to restrict the civil liberties of others has me worried.

Even more worrying was a "Despatches" documentary shown on Channel 4 TV on the 19th February 1992, portraying an alleged expose of Satanism and ritual abuse. An array of "survivors" were brought before us; some of whom were severely traumatized individuals and in need of much care and help to re-build their lives. Others had me suspecting malice as a motivating force. These "survivors" refuse to go to the police, just like our Mrs. Harper neglected to report a whole heap of crimes such as; desecration, rape, child abuse, drug running, animal brutality, murder, eating fetuses and stealing library books. When at long last someone goes as far as pointing to where the bodies are buried, the police do a lot of digging, but find nothing. Similarly, those cases that come to trial are thrown out on the grounds of insufficient evidence or doubts about the social workers' methods.

Therapists and social workers assure us that the physical reactions of these people when under analysis are authentic, but this proves little. The link between mind and body is profound; the body reacts to the mind's content regardless of the authenticity of that content; i.e., belief will evoke as great a response as actual recall. What do these "carers" have to gain by their behavior? I guess it's much sexier to be on a special Satanic ritual abuse group, rather than just another social worker in the child unit. After the "Operation Julie" team split up, the majority of its members left the police rather than return to normal duties - the power of being in a special elite seduces the best of us.

As is usual Uncle Aleister comes in for some ritual abuse; this evil black magician (sic) on the "Bloody Sacrifice"; and "Dispatches" quotes those infamous lines from page 219: "A male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim."[5] (beyond_reason.php#n5)

But they neglected the all-important footnote: "It is the sacrifice of oneself spiritually. And the intelligence and innocence of that male child are the perfect understanding of the Magician, his one aim, without lust of result. And male he must be, because what he sacrifices is not the material blood, but his creative power."5 We can surmise that either the "Dispatches" team are totally incompetent to have missed that footnote, or deliberately dishonest. As far as I can tell the only sin in what Uncle Aleister suggests is the Sin of Onan. (See: Sacred Mushroom and the Cross by J M Allegro for a full explanation of the link between sperm and sin.)

Finally, after teasing us overmuch with hints of a secret Satanic group that regularly murders babes in arms and worships Uncle Aleister in a basement Temple in the East End of London, they were going to reveal all. Well, actually not all: they stop short of naming names, due no doubt to a sharp eye on this country's libel laws. Instead we get shown clips of an arty video from The Temple ov Psychic Youth's playroom; a video I thought was available by mail order, and some of which was shown publicly as far back as 1987 at the 2nd Thelemic Conference at Oxford. The offending content was a little low-level S&M (low-level compared to what is currently available from Amsterdam), and certainly not as visually gripping as some films by Dali or Kenneth Anger. What seemed to have been forgotten is that Sadomasochistic behavior is ritualistic, but that doesn't mean that ritual is an incidence of intention of abuse.

It was confidently stated that claims of identical detail concerning Satanic ritual abuse go back 700 years; but in all this time, those tricky Satanists have evaded capture. "Dispatches" claimed that the wily Satanists escape the net because their crimes are "beyond belief", and hence not believed. Personally I wonder whether the claims themselves may well be beyond reason. Suppose these survivors claimed to have been abducted by fairies, or the Evil Space Brothers; how would we react? Evidence is coming through that suggests that Multiple Personalities and UFO abductees show a tendency of abuse of some sort as a child. Hypnotized subjects are able to construct a detailed and realistic UFO kidnap scenario without having any UFO knowledge or experience.[6] (beyond_reason.php#n6) We are obviously talking about something that is coming up from the deeper structures of the mind, possibly at the level of the Archetypes, and I'm sure we can agree that the "Satanic Ritual" scenario is well embedded in the group consciousness. We should bear in mind two things; firstly, the mind is a much more complex entity than our current models allow for. Also that memory is symbolic; it does not run back like a film; rather it is reconstructed from elements that "seem right", but the result is always partial, leaving room for symbolism to dress the events in a ways that serves a deeper need. A child being treated brutally by parents it believes should be loving, could then "demonise" them, so that images of "satanic parents" will slowly emerge in therapy as the real trauma is dealt with. The symbolic nature of this recalled material allows it to be easily dealt with by psychodrama such as exorcism. Maybe it's all true; many abusers use ritual trappings to induce fear, so maybe there are Satanic abusers; Lord knows there are more than enough Christian and non-Satanic abusers about. But to politicize others' pain and suffering is to my mind, both wrong-headed and dangerous.

The truth is that there are a lot of sick people out there, both perpetrators and victims who are hurt and traumatized. They need all the help we can give, not exploitation. We have seen the effect of mass hysteria before; from the Pendle Witches and Jews up to the Guildford Four and Orkney Twelve. The Witch Hunts died out because willful skeptics refused to believe on women flying about the countryside on broomsticks, and tended to (rather unkindly)

laugh at the people who believed in such things. The UK is currently in its worse recession this century, and we can confidently expect a rise in the rates of suicide, child abuse and scape-goating. Right now we have a greater need of willful skeptics than we do of fanatics fresh from a medieval reality tunnel. I rest my case.

And not forgetting DANCE WITH THE DEVIL: A Young Woman's Struggle to Escape the Coven's Curse, by Audrey Harper with Harry Pugh, published by Kingsway Publications. (As an interesting postscript to this article: readers may be interested to learn that it was Audrey Harper's appearance on Australian TV, telling us all about the dangers of Satanic/Witchcraft ritual child abuse that prompted me to found the Pan Pacific Pagan Alliance - Julia)

Endnotes:

- Joseph Campbell: The Power of Myth
- Barbara O'Brien: Operators and Things - The Inner Life of a Schizophrenic
- Richard L Gregory (Ed.): The Oxford Companion to the Mind
- Robert Anton Wilson: Sex and Drugs - A Journey Beyond Limits
- Aleister Crowley: Magick
- Hilary Evans: Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors

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Quote of the moment:

I must have a prodigious quantity of mind; it takes me as long as a week sometimes to make it up.

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